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I'm glad to be in St. Louis tonight for a whole flock of reasons: mostly to talk a bit about ducks and duck management to duck hunters. But also it's good to be in an historic city that has suddenly remembered its great past because all of us conservationists, especially, ought to be remembering our past even as we struggle to develop a Greater Future. I can't think of any place where it would be more fitting to talk about waterfowl than here in the center of the Mississippi Flyway, that fabled route of migration for waterfowl as well as for human exploration. It isn't exactly an accident that the Mississippi Flyway has more waterfowl hunters than any two of the other three flyways together.

To set my stage for this meeting: I'm sure we all agree that the days of grabbing Ol' Betsy, stepping off the back porch and dropping a couple of ducks are about as far away in time as the days when your forefathers butchered two buffalo to pull them through the winter. There may be a few, very few, people who can still blaze away in the backyard--but most of us have to know something about ducks, weather, habitat and human cooperation to get enjoyment out of wildfowling today.

The shooter--as opposed to the hunter--who doesn't know a snow goose from a coot is not only missing most of the joy of waterfowl, but he's going to have to quit shooting after the first couple of days--now and in the future.

Because, gentlemen, we are either going to have waterfowl management by species, in one form or another, or we will simply have to gear all duck hunting to the birds in shortest supply, which will mean the shortest season. The weakest link then, in the waterfowl chain, will set the pace for all.

Species management is always complicated--and in more ways than the regulations under which you are now hunting in Missouri and Illinois. I hope and believe we can simplify those regulations in some respects, although they may become even more difficult in other aspects.

Now, before I go further with this idea of species management, I think it is well that we back off from the subject of hunting just a minute and consider this hobby of ours from a different perspective.

It's a human failing to get so close to the trees that we can't see the forest. We lose our perspective--sometimes our sense of values. We see the destruction of our swamplands by draining, the needless destruction of our trees with saws, lands with plows, clean water with waste, clean air with smog. We see the ever-increasing misuse of pesticides and our greatest river and its tributaries so polluted that fish died by the millions last year. We breathe air in our cities today so foul it would have choked our grandfathers--and indeed it often chokes us.

But are we really aware that these things are insidiously choking our waterfowl as well as ourselves? If we are to retain our great flyway migrations, we must retain the integrity of all our land. The two are inseparable.

Within the past few years, Congress has given us a bevy of new conservation laws to work with, and a beginning has been made on many fronts. Also, in the past 2 years, our Bureau has added nearly half a million acres of important waterfowl habitat. We have intensive research programs going full blast on chemical poisons, wildlife diseases, and endangered species.

It's a slow, uphill battle, and it needs the support of every one of us. We've simply got to start looking at that forest--sick as it may be. We have no more right to destroy than we have the ability to create, and man alone has the power to revitalize his environment.

Let's take a look now at species management. In almost any given season, we find that some varieties of ducks and possibly geese are in short supply in a given area, while other types of waterfowl may be quite plentiful. Of course, we find the same situation in other wildlife; a good deer year may be a very poor quail year. But there isn't much chance of confusing a bobwhite with a whitetail. Not so with a mallard and a black duck--at least until it's too late to do anything about it.

But species management isn't anything new, even in waterfowl. We've had it for many years. All of you remember the closed seasons on wood ducks, or past closures on canvasbacks and redheads, or the one-mallard limit. None of us really likes these restrictions. But the point is: these restrictions did work!

We can shoot woodies again, and cans and redheads; the mallards are back significantly; and this is because we could restrict by species.

Now you're all aware that I oversimplified this a little, waterfowl management or any other form of wildlife development takes more than human rules and regulations on shooting. But we also know that nothing is quite so final as the boom of a 12-gauge, and that shooting hours, bag limits, restricted areas and seasonal lengths can be established by men for men.

There's not a great deal we can do about the weather: rain, snow or the lack of it--crops that can be fed upon--late or early seasonal changes. And we can't do nearly as much as we wish we could about land misuses.

But we can use flexible hunting rules, ranging from seasons through methods, to liberalize or restrict according to the forecast of waterfowl numbers. We can seek "people management" which will in turn provide wildlife management. And "people management," as practiced in the past hunting season, played a large part, I think, in providing you a more liberal set of regulations this fall.

I've been listening to, and talking to, hunters for a good many years now, frequently thinking more like a hunter than a wildlife administrator. And none of us likes to be told we're being "managed" by others. Yet organized society--what we call "civilization"--is based upon people management. A major difference between societies, presently and historically, is the way we arrange for this management--in simple words, the way we decide what laws shall govern us and how we shall enforce them.

In this democracy, waterfowl rules are not devised on the whim of a Secretary of the Interior, nor based only upon the opinions of a director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Admittedly, our regulations are based upon estimates--but they are calculated estimates, educated judgments arrived at after hearing a great deal of evidence and opinion.

I'm sure you know of our waterfowl surveys in the Canadian provinces and the breeding grounds of the United States. You have read how our airplanes fly the transects to determine the number of breeders, the extent and condition of nesting and rearing cover, the amount of water available throughout the breeding season and the number of ducklings per brood. You know of our close liaison with the Canadian Wildlife Service, the various State and provincial fish and game departments and nongovernment groups, such as Ducks Unlimited. I'm sure you realize we gather information from many sources, such as the Weather Bureau, farm organizations and local cooperators.

But all this assemblage of a mass of physical facts is only the beginning. Into all this data we feed the results of our long-range banding returns, our wing collections, our hunter mail questionnaires. We have assembled methods of checking back on earlier estimates to see how accurate we were in forecasting fall flights, the return of breeders in the spring, the amount of good breeding areas that would be available, the probable results if so many million wings flew back into so many million acres and found so much acreage of good habitat. We calculate from experience of skilled, devoted scientists who are called wildlife biologists.

We know quite a lot--although never enough--about migratory birds, the areas they migrate from and to, and how they will behave. We know quite a lot about duck hunters, too, and how they will behave. Thus, we now have the ability to predict, rather accurately, how many waterfowl will be taken from a fall flight under a proposed set of regulations. We can estimate with

reasonable assurance how many birds will return to their ancestral nesting grounds in the spring. I can predict now that we'll have more "breeding space" in the north for mallards come spring than we'll have birds to fill it--and I can tell you that we held down on the mallard limits this year, despite good production in the spring, because we wanted to be sure that lots of your favorite ducks would survive to go back north and give us more breeding pairs and more birds for the fall of 1967.

You recognize that I've oversimplified again, of course. There are other factors that enter these equations, and we haven't quite refined our techniques to the point where we can regulate rainfall, temperature, or the world's demand for wheat.

Yet we do know there's water where we've got to have water--and we also know that water doesn't produce ducks; only ducks produce ducks. It looks like we'll have a good blend next spring, when we start gathering up the information that will be fed into a final August decision on what you can do in October, November and December of 1967. And remember that the information we gather now, from you and many thousands of other "yous," will play an important part in our estimations when the time comes for a decision.

After all, we manage wildlife for people--and by "we" I do not mean solely my Federal Bureau, or Bill Towell's wildlife staff in Missouri, or Bill Lodge's Conservation Department in Illinois. Every wildlife biologist is working for and with people, as well as wildlife.

Now regulations, as I explained earlier, are only one ingredient in our waterfowl "cake." There is something else that can make that cake rise, and there is something else that you can do besides skimming the frosting off each fall. You have a major stake not only in the betterment of the waterfowl resource, but in the improvement of the total environment around you. You have a moral responsibility, individually and collectively to join in the national commitment to act for a cleaner, healthier America. Whether you like it or not, you have got to be more than a consumer of this resource. You have got to protect it by joining this battle against the "diminishing livability" of our environment if we're going to retain our waterfowl "cake" and save a slice for our kids to enjoy. You in this room represent many vocations, but I hope you will make conservation your avocation . . . and waterfowl your hobby.

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